

Following last month's decision by the Assembly to approve the designation of the Northern Ireland Departments and the list of cross-border bodies, and the signing last week by the United Kingdom and Ireland of the historic treaties to set up the institutions, it is vital that this decision be implemented without delay. Progress in all of these areas is, of course, dependent on the establishment of the multi-party Executive, as provided in the Agreement. We are dismayed at the delay in establishing the Executive, and urge it be established as soon as possible. It is the best way to create conditions for progress on other difficult issues, including the problem of decommissioning.

The carnage inflicted on the town of Omagh last August was a grim reminder that, in spite of all that has been achieved, there are those who still do not recognize the futility of violence. The cowardly murder of Rosemary Nelson this week reminds of the urgency of the task at hand. The horror of these actions unites all the people of Ireland and Great Britain, and friends of Ireland everywhere, in a determination that such methods will be totally repudiated and will never succeed. We also condemn, in the strongest terms, the practice of sectarian attacks, punishment beatings, and other acts of violence. These actions are a violation of fundamental human rights, and serve only to promote further division and recrimination. Against this background of irresponsible and unacceptable reliance on violence, we commend all those who, notwithstanding the pressures caused by these attacks, refuse to be diverted from the pursuit of peace and political progress.

We have in the past consistently drawn attention to the importance of developing a police organization in Northern Ireland capable of attracting and sustaining the support of all parts of the community. We welcome the creation of the Patten Commission to propose new arrangements for policing, accountable to and fully representative of the society. A major responsibility rests on the members of the Commission on this vitally important issue. Their mandate from the Agreement should lead to far-reaching change and we look forward to their report later this year.

We attach particular importance to the provisions in the Good Friday Agreement which promote a new respect for human rights. Such respect is essential if the commitment to equality, which lies at the very heart of the undertaking, is to be given practical effect. We are heartened by progress in relation to the Human Rights Commissions and look forward to the development of close cross-border co-operation on this vital issue. We also hope to see early progress on the review of the criminal laws, and the dismantling of emergency legislation.

We are concerned by evidence of the lack of protection for lawyers active on human rights cases in Northern Ireland, as described by the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and urge an early response to calls for an independent inquiry into the murder of Belfast lawyer Pat Finucane. We will also continue to follow closely the progress of the inquiry into the tragic events of Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972.

As preparations for this year's marching season begin, we note with concern that, despite efforts to encourage dialogue, the situation at Drumcree remains disturbing. We call on all involved to uphold the decisions of the Parades Commission.

The Friends of Ireland welcome the strong support which President Clinton and both

parties in Congress have given to the peace process, and to the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including the continuing support for the International Fund for Ireland. We salute the parties on what has been achieved thus far and believe that with commitment and determination, and a readiness to seek accommodation, the remaining differences can be overcome.

As we prepare to enter the new century, the parties to the Good Friday Agreement have a truly historic opportunity to achieve peace with justice for the benefit of all generations to come. As always, we in the Friends of Ireland stand ready to help in any way we can.

FRIENDS OF IRELAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

House: Dennis J. Hastert, Richard A. Gephardt, James T. Walsh.

Senate: Edward M. Kennedy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Christopher J. Dodd, Connie Mack.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). The Senator from Nevada.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended for another 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR JOHN BREAUX

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a man who is a Member of this body who has devoted his entire adult life to public service. Today I speak of Senator JOHN BREAUX of Louisiana. I do that today because there are a number of things that have been written since yesterday, when the Medicare Commission made their report. I think lost in the information that has been produced is the fact that Senator BREAUX has spent tireless hours, weeks, and months on this one proposal.

When I came to the Congress in 1982, Senator BREAUX had already been a Member of the House of Representatives for 10 years. He came to the House of Representatives when he was 28 years old. As I said, he has served his entire adult life in public service. Even prior to coming to the House of Representatives, Senator BREAUX had worked on a congressional staff.

Here is a man who could have been a success, as he has been as a Member of the House of Representatives and the Senate, in anything he wanted to do. He had a fine record as a student. He could have made a lot of money practicing law, but he decided to devote his life to public service. I think too often we lose sight of what people do to contribute to the public good.

In my estimation, no one has contributed to the public good more than Senator JOHN BREAUX in the years he has been a Member of the House of

Representatives and the Senate. If there is a difficult problem, JOHN BREAUX has to be called in to work on that problem.

This is an example. He was called to be the Cochairman of the Medicare Commission, a very difficult job, but there was someone needed who understood the finances of this country; and that includes the tax structure of this country, that includes the very difficult health care delivery system we have, not only for those people who are not seniors, but particularly seniors, people who are on Medicare. I think we tend to forget how complex Medicare is and how important it is to the well-being of this country.

Mr. President, I served as a member of a county hospital board when Medicare came into being in the 1960s; 1966 through 1968 I served on that board. Prior to Medicare coming into being, about 40 percent of everyone that entered our hospital who were seniors had no health insurance of any kind. And that is the way it was around the rest of the country.

Today, though, Mr. President, over 99 percent of seniors have health insurance. That is because of Medicare. Senator BREAUX understood this very difficult problem. That is why he was asked to be the Chairman of this Commission.

Of the 17 members of this Commission, 10 of them agreed as to what should be done. I am not going to get into the merits of what the findings of the Commission were other than to say it was very difficult. Ten people agreed to the findings because of the diligent work of Chairman BREAUX.

I repeat, he did not spend hours on this program; he did not spend days—he spent weeks of his time. When other people were doing other things with their constituencies at home or taking a little time off from the rigors of this body, he was devoting his time to working on Medicare.

I mention that because not only was Senator BREAUX called in to be the Chair of the Medicare Commission, he has also done a number of other difficult things. We in the West understand the Wallop-Breaux legislation which established a program for restoring our coastal areas in the country. It set damages for boats that damaged the environment. It is a very important part of the environmental movement that has taken place in this country. Senator BREAUX was at the forefront of that. The legislation is named after him.

When, in 1993, we needed to pass a bill, the Budget Deficit Reduction Act, we needed to pass a bill that would put this country on a sound financial footing, one of the persons that worked on this to make sure that this was able to be accomplished was Senator BREAUX. He worked on the energy part of that legislation. Being from the State of